

Don't Run With Scissors!

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Safety Communiqué from the Technical Division Head



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The old adage of March coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb certainly seems to be true this year. Our weather has fluctuated dramatically over the last few weeks, with bitter cold, snow, rain, winds, freezing temperatures, warm ups, melting snow, flooding and more. This time of year in particular brings hidden dangers in the outdoors. The days may warm sufficiently to melt off some snow, but then the temperatures drop and freeze the water into smooth ice that may be hidden beneath remaining snow. Taking the time to anticipate conditions we cannot immediately see (such as ice beneath snow) may make the difference between a safe journey to work and an unplanned visit to the hospital. The coming warm season will bring its own “environmental challenges”, mostly in the form of wild life (bee & wasp stings, geese attacks, etc.) and severe weather. Again, clear thinking, anticipation and preventive actions are the best tools to avoid accidents.

The coming months may also bring challenges related to the planned furloughs we are experiencing. Employees may attempt to back up absent employees by performing work for which they aren't fully qualified. While we appreciate the thoughtfulness and the spirit of these actions, they could lead to some accidents. Therefore I urge you to consult with your immediate supervisor or the department head before proceeding with a task for which you have not been properly trained.

Although it may feel like the work must get done somehow, no matter what, that philosophy is never followed in the Technical Division when it comes to the personal safety of our employees.

INCIDENT BACKGROUND	HOW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED
<p>There were multiple incidents in the last month of employees slipping on the snow and ice, particular when ice was hidden beneath the snow.</p> <p>In one of the cases, the employee was clearing an area in preparation for a dewar delivery.</p>	<p>Employees need to be cognizant of the fact that there may be ice hidden under any fresh snowfall.</p> <p>The employee could have salted the sloped area to reduce the hazard. Better yet, the employee could have made arrangements with the internal division snow removal squad to address the dewar pad area with their snow removal equipment. In the future, when a snowfall is predicted the night before a dewar delivery is scheduled, the importance of that dewar delivery will be assessed. Additionally, during the winter months a reserve dewar will be kept on hand.</p>
<p>An employee repairing an electric motor grabbed the motor's shaft with bare hands to pull it into position. The shaft of the motor has a groove, called a keyway slot, running the length of the shaft. After moving the motor, the employee noticed a very small scratch on the palm of the left hand. He reported to Medical for evaluation. The cut was cleaned and the employee returned to work without restrictions.</p>	<p>The shaft did not appear to have sharp edges, therefore the employee used his bare hands to assist in moving the motor. The employee did not use leather gloves, which are available to all employees in the department, to protect his hands. Employees should use leather gloves when lifting or moving equipment.</p>
<p>An employee walking up a set of stairs did not step high enough at the landing, instead hitting a toe against the front of the landing. The employee, who was not holding onto the handrail, lost their balance and fell into a vertical support for the handrail around the platform.</p>	<p>Employees need to hold on to the handrail when ascending and descending stairs. Employees therefore must keep one hand free and not carry items in both hands, not have both of their hands in pockets, or run or leap up or down stairs.</p>

Most safety experts believe that all accidents can be prevented. As you can see by the prevention column, a little extra care and attention on the part of the individuals might have avoided these accidents from occurring.